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author is evidently a partisan, and prints at length the quotations calculated to confirm his inference, while the contrary evidence is seriously slighted.

A. P. W.

The Housing Question in London: Being an Account of the Housing Work done by the Metropolitan Board of Works and the London County Council, between the years 1855 and 1900; with a summary of the Acts of Parliament under which they have worked. Printed for the London County Council by J. Truscott & Son. London: P. S. King & Son, 1901. 8vo, pp. xvi + 381.

ONE of the most lucid, interesting, and suggestive public documents ever issued is the report of the London County Council on *The Housing Question in London*, 1855-1900, prepared under the direction of Mr. C. J. Stewart by Mr. W. J. Russell and Mr. M. H. Cox. In the space of less than four hundred pages, this report sets forth the contrasted policies of the Metropolitan Board of Works down to 1889, and of the London County Council since that date, in dealing with the housing problem.

To the American reader, not yet accustomed to regard the building of dwellings for any one class of citizens as an established function of the public authorities, this volume comes as a revelation; exhibiting the London County Council following a firmly established and comprehensive policy of building, letting, and maintaining workmen's dwellings to the extent of accommodating, up to September 1900, 32,000 persons, with schemes undertaken for accommodating 12,000 more; and printing tables setting forth in detail the expenditures of many millions of pounds sterling, together with a sinking fund calculated for the repayment of the whole outlay in sixty years, thus assuring to future generations a very valuable asset.

The utter failure of the local authorities, as set forth in this report convincingly and at length, to use powers of regulating the conditions of dwellings owned by private persons and companies and occupied by working people as tenants — powers vested in these authorities in some cases forty years ago — amounts to a demonstration of the impossibility of dealing effectively with the housing problem without active, constructive intervention of the community as a whole, after the man-

ner of London through its county council. And the equally utter failure of the same local authorities to bring the local railways to terms in the matter of adequate workmen's trains, goes far to explain the phenomenon of chronic overcrowding. But who shall explain these prolonged and terrible failures of local authorities entrusted with powers in the interest of workmen and their families, failures the counterpart of which is only too familiar in our American cities?

Aside from the plans of work accomplished, work undertaken and now under construction, and work projected for the near future, with the very instructive and enlightening schedules of investments and income, two of the most interesting chapters in this valuable report deal with the matter of cheap trains and the still existing overcrowding of enormous areas. One startling statement in this connection which the reader would willingly have had further elucidated is the following :

That there is ample vacant space even within the county of London for the erection of new accommodations appears from the fact that the council's valuer, at the beginning of 1899, estimated the amount of building land available within the county at 14,000 acres (p. 92); [while] there is, immediately beyond the borders and yet not an hour's journey from the center of London, a quantity of land suitable for building purposes and only awaiting development by the provision of adequate means of locomotion to and from the outlying districts.

Would it not be in line with the present activities of the county council to provide such means of locomotion? And, if they were provided might not a part of the housing work now doing by the council be then undertaken by private initiative? Or is the council, perhaps, already active in this direction? On this point the report is silent.

Elsewhere the writer is quoted as follows :

The general effect of the present inequalities of taxation is to place the heaviest burden upon the least valuable land, or rather upon that portion which is occupied by buildings, since cultivated land, however valuable, is only assessed at an agricultural rental value, and unoccupied land is not liable for rates at all. The result, therefore, of the present system of local taxation appears to be a penalty on the building industry.

How much the building industry, for the benefit of the working class, might be stimulated by a thoroughgoing correction of this inversion of the reasonable order of taxation, can only be surmised, the

report giving no hint of activity on the part of the county council in the matter of recommending measures of taxation. The report leaves us to speculate, also, as to the future action of Parliament in the matter of transferring power to deal with the local railroads from the local authorities and the board of trade, which seem to have done the least possible, to the county council which manifestly stands ready to promote cheap transportation in and around London.

No student of municipal evolution can afford to neglect this chapter in the history of London, from the futile attempts in the middle of the century to deal with the insanitary districts by conferring power to regulate conditions upon the local authorities; through the second period of authorizing the metropolitan board of works to buy and clear areas, selling sites to corporations or persons contracting to build workmen's dwellings, to the present full-fledged municipal ownership of workmen's dwellings on the largest possible scale.

The usefulness of this report is enhanced by a full and clear table of contents, an alphabetical index, a list of plans, a table of statutes (beginning with 35 Eliz., c. 6, and ending with 63 and 64 Victoria, c. 59), an introduction giving "a short outline of the system which has obtained since 1855, the year in which corporate existence may be first said to have been conferred upon that part of London which had grown up outside of the walls of the ancient city," and Appendices A to J, containing much valuable material not easily included in the body of the report.

FLORENCE KELLEY.

The American Negro: What he was, what he is, and what he may become. A Critical and Practical Discussion. By WILLIAM HANNIBAL THOMAS. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901. 8vo. pp. xxvi + 440.

THE author of this work, himself partly of negro ancestry, has the courage to face clearly the fact, which so many sentimental writers on the negro problem avoid, that the real difficulty lies in the hereditary nature of the race. He perceives "the folly of saying that the negro has had but three decades of opportunity for self-culture, when, as a matter of fact, he has had an equal chance with the rest of mankind from the dawn of creation" (p. 369). Indeed, a gloomy and somewhat extreme view is presented of the character, or lack of character,